

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and twenty-sixth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 4 February 2020, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Rachid Belbaki (Algeria)

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The President (*spoke in French*): Ladies and gentlemen, I call to order the 1526th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Before we deal with the items on today's agenda, I wish to extend a warm welcome to a new colleague, His Excellency Mr. Gonalo de Barros Carvalho e Mello Mouro, Ambassador and Special Representative of Brazil to the Conference, who has recently assumed his responsibilities. On behalf of my Government and the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to assure him of our full cooperation and support in his new assignment.

I now invite the Conference to examine the requests from non-member States wishing to participate in our work that had been received as of yesterday, Monday, 3 February 2020, at 3 p.m. They are contained in document CD/WP.625, a copy of which is on your desks. Any request from non-member States received after that date will be presented for your consideration and decision at the next plenary meeting.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with its rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): Ladies and gentlemen, I would first like to give the floor to delegations wishing to make statements in the plenary meeting. Once the list of speakers has been exhausted, I intend to move to an informal setting for an exchange of views on the documents that were the subject of an email from the secretariat yesterday, hard copies of which will be provided. I will then close the informal meeting and resume the formal plenary meeting in order to give the floor to any delegations wishing to speak.

Distinguished colleagues, I would now like to turn to the list of speakers for today. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Poland.

Mr. Czech (Poland): Thank you, Mr. President. Since I am taking the floor for the very first time during this session, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of this important function and wish you a positive outcome to your presidency. Let me also thank you, Mr. President, for presenting two consecutive non-papers concerning the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament. They are much appreciated evidence of your efforts to keep the Conference on a substantive track.

I would like to use this opportunity also to commend all six States holding the Conference presidency this year for their teamwork and for inviting the member States holding the preceding and following presidencies, Zimbabwe and Belgium, to your consultations. Poland has attached great importance to such cooperation among the Presidents since it was introduced for the first time in 2006, during the Polish presidency of the Conference.

There are two important anniversaries in the year 2020 which we intend to celebrate: the 75 years of the United Nations and the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In both cases, these are tremendous achievements of the international community, which should be preserved and strengthened. Poland, as a member of the bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference, will spare no efforts to ensure that they will be.

Mr. President, we believe that we are able to come back to substantial and topical debate this year in the Conference, most likely by establishing subsidiary bodies. Your non-paper of yesterday is very instrumental in this context. We are also of the opinion that by addressing the organizational aspects of the Conference, our deliberations will be more comprehensive and will better serve the future goal of commencing negotiations.

Mr. President, with regard to procedural aspects, allow me to echo the position of the European Union on the right of Cyprus to observer status in the Conference.

I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Poland for his statement and for his kind words for the President. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. De Barros Carvalho e Mello Mourão (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I wish to congratulate you on being made President of the Conference on Disarmament. The previous presidency, the presidency of Algeria, has given us high hopes that your presidency, too, will be very prolific and positive; the coordination among the six Presidents of this session has already set a good example. Mr. President, you can rely on the continuous support of the Brazilian delegation.

As this is the first time that I have taken the floor since I arrived in Geneva a few months ago, and as I am unable to speak in Portuguese, my mellifluous language, I will, in tribute, make my statement in Spanish. Mr. President, all Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries are fully and transparently committed to disarmament and non-proliferation. We are free of nuclear weapons and at peace with everyone. We disagree often – and strongly – but peacefully.

Mr. President, what one hears about the paralysis affecting this Conference is very nearly a mantra. Regrettably, I must add my own voice to that mantra. However, like so many before me, I do so with hope and a sense of optimism, because we must hope that the worst is behind us.

This is the Conference on Disarmament, and now more than ever, at this moment in our history, disarmament must become a political priority. Thus far, the failure to disarm has not led us to non-proliferation; on the contrary, it has led to proliferation. Since the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, we have seen proliferation rather than the disarmament of those States that are still armed. Today, there are almost twice as many nuclear-weapon and nuclear-possessor States as there were when the Treaty entered into force.

Disarmament is therefore urgent not only for the purposes of achieving disarmament itself but also for ensuring effective non-proliferation. We trust that the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty will provide the opportunity to compensate for the Treaty's shortcomings.

We like-minded parties were able to negotiate the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and keep to the promise of article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is my pleasure to note that Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries account for a quarter of the countries that have signed the former Treaty and a third of the countries that have ratified it.

In addition to being the fiftieth anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, this year marks the twenty-ninth year of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for the Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials. This Agency represents an important step for South America in terms of regional denuclearization and non-proliferation and can serve as an inspiration to others.

Mr. President, our agenda is once again entirely the same as it was before, but we are hopeful that, this year, we can move forward on certain matters. We believe that it may be possible for us to make progress on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Regarding the latter issue, Brazil submitted a proposal at the recent meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts, which is still on the table and could prove useful in efforts to remove obstacles to negotiations. Similarly, Brazil co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 74/50 on nuclear disarmament verification (A/RES/74/50), which led to the creation of a group of governmental experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament, an issue that we believe is relevant. Still on the nuclear issue, we call on the annex 2 States of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to sign that Treaty in order to give it effect.

Mr. President, we are aware that, paradoxically, today's scientific and technological transformations may represent security challenges for this Conference. While advances in microbiology should be evaluated in the light of the Biological Weapons Convention, advances in cybernetics have as yet unknown security implications. On the latter point, I wish to highlight the fact that a Brazilian expert is now presiding over one of the simultaneous negotiation processes on cybersecurity of the United Nations. We hope that these processes will contribute to a better definition of the issues involved.

Lastly, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, for having presented your non-paper on the programme of work. We believe that it provides a very good basis for negotiation – my delegation will comment on it later – and is a clear reminder of our responsibility as our countries' representatives in this Conference, which is and must continue to be the sole multilateral body for disarmament issues.

Once again, Mr. President, you can rely on the unwavering support of the Brazilian delegation. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Brazil for his comments and for the kind words addressed to this presidency. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. Distinguished representatives, I will now suspend the meeting and move to an informal discussion. For technical reasons, the secretariat needs a few minutes before we can move to an informal setting. I beg your indulgence in this matter.

The meeting was suspended from 10.25 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.

The President (*spoke in French*): As we resume our formal meeting, I would like to know whether any delegation wishes to take the floor. It would seem not to be the case.

Dear colleagues, I would like to thank you once again for your comments and suggestions and to assure you that, alongside the other five Presidents of the 2020 session, I will endeavour to take them into consideration. I would also invite delegations to contact me bilaterally should they have any questions that they would like to discuss in further detail. The next plenary meeting will take place on Thursday, 6 February, at 10 a.m. in this room.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.